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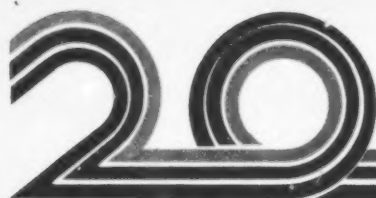
ABSTRACT

In 1983, 100 members of a second-year marketing class at British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) participated in a market research project to determine the views of BCIT and other postsecondary institutions held by various groups outside of the college, to analyze the findings, and to prepare recommendations for action by BCIT. A total of 6,500 people were surveyed representing five market segments: the general public (N=2,000), BCIT (N=1,500), school counselors (N=350), non-BCIT students (N=1,150), and employers (N=1,500). Of the general public sample, 322 people responded to the hand-delivered survey instrument; 723 BCIT alumni, 169 counselors, and 615 employers responded to mailed surveys; and 1024 non-BCIT students were either interviewed or responded to a mailed survey. Study findings included the following: (1) the overall image of BCIT among the general public was one of excellence; (2) high school counselors viewed BCIT very positively, but saw transfer to and from the college as a problem area; (3) many non-BCIT students were confused about the characteristics differentiating BCIT from other colleges and universities in British Columbia; (4) almost 90% of the alumni respondents entered employment in their BCIT field of study, and the majority first came to BCIT for short, intensive, applied programs; and (5) employers consistently felt that BCIT graduates were more prepared to enter the job market than other students. Selected recommendations from the student reports are included.

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PERCEPTIONS OF BCIT:

A SYNOPSIS

OF

THE 1984 BCIT MARKET RESEARCH PROJECT

"Solid technical training"

"Highly regarded training and educational facility"

"Satisfies training not provided by other institutions"

"Very high calibre institute"

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
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"looking to the future ... for 20 years"

JC 840 342

Introduction

This report summarizes the student market research project conducted during the 1983-84 academic year by one hundred members of the second year marketing class at BCIT. Under the direction of the instructor, Ron Venne, the project used a formal research design with mail and interview questionnaires. 6500 people were contacted in five market segments across British Columbia: general public, high school counsellors, BCIT alumni, employers and students not attending BCIT.

The student researchers produced twenty-five reports, one by each team of four. A selection of findings was presented by students in a special presentation, complete with computer-graphics, sponsored by the B.C. Chapter of the Professional Marketing Research Society at the Robson Square Media Centre on April 19, 1984.

This synopsis provides a digest of highlights of the student research. The data collected by the project will be brought together by BCIT staff and integrated with the results of other work, notably the ongoing First Year Student Survey project.

Purpose of the Project

The 1984 Market Research Project was commissioned by BCIT as an "arms-length client" for the annual project of the marketing research students:

- i) to determine the perceptions of BCIT and other post-secondary institutions held by various groups outside the Institute; and,
- 2) to analyze the findings and prepare recommendations for action by BCIT.

Methodology

Based on the purposes of the study and with insight provided by other background information, on demographics and market-related factors, the research design identified five target groups for the survey. Members of each group were contacted with one of five especially created instruments through mail survey or structured interview.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Techniques & Sample</u>
General Public	322	Hand-deliver to residence*(2000)
BCIT Alumni	713	Mail (1500)
School Counsellors	169	Mail (350)
Non-BCIT Students	1024	Interview *(800); Mail (350)
Employers	<u>615</u>	<u>Mail (1500)</u>
Total	2853	Total 6500
		*Lower Mainland

Highlights of Findings

I. GENERAL PUBLIC

- The overall image of BCIT is one of excellence, UBC appears to be the main competitor.
- 46% report BCIT means "applied/practical orientation in many professional fields."
- Universities and BCIT have similar perceived qualities while community colleges are ranked lower than both BCIT and universities.
- 57% are unaware of the BCIT downtown campus
- BCIT is well-known, especially through word of mouth, as a high quality technical Institute.

II. HIGH-SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

- Overall view of BCIT is "decidedly positive, with BCIT thought of as unique post-secondary institute."
- BCIT is perceived as more closely comparable to Universities than Community Colleges, especially by counsellors in the lower mainland.
- BCIT graduates are seen as somewhat better prepared than University graduates and much better prepared than Community College graduates.
- A most important positive factor, is job placement rates for BCIT graduates.
- Impersonal forms of promotion (calendars and brochures) were rated highly; personal methods were rated poorly (seminars and counsellor contact).
- 50% of counsellors see difficulties with program transfer to and from BCIT as a problem area.

III. NON-BCIT STUDENTS

- BCIT has an excellent reputation among students outside the Institute.
- The majority of students feel that courses at BCIT are not comparable to courses at University or college.
- Students are somewhat confused about the specific differentiating characteristics of BCIT in contrast to UBC, colleges or PVI.
- BCIT is seen as servicing all of B.C.
- Length of program is important to 73% of respondents.

IV. ALUMNI

- Alumni hold the Institute in high regard in terms of good training, high job placement rate and the extensive career mixes available to students.
- The short (2-year), intensive, applied programs were the reason why respondents first came to BCIT.
- Almost 90% of alumni entered employment in their field of study, with over 85% having a job within three months of graduating.
- The BCIT diploma figured prominently for 70% of graduates when seeking employment.
- 54% of graduates said they would consider returning to BCIT for a double diploma.

V. EMPLOYERS

- Employers consistently felt that BCIT graduates were more prepared to enter the job market (both on a skill level and as a whole) than students from other forms of post-secondary education.
- The value of the BCIT diploma was found to rank high in the eyes of industry.
- Employers feel that a reduction in class hours could seriously harm the level of education and hence the value of the BCIT diploma.
- Continuing Education is very attractive to 65% of employers, especially in more advanced areas of management and engineering technology.
- Over three-quarters of employers surveyed had hired a BCIT graduate and were satisfied with their capabilities in 84% of cases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Each of the twenty-five student reports made a dozen or more suggestions, the following selection is illustrative:

- A direct mail brochure of high quality should be designed and targeted to those employers who could use the Downtown campus to its best advantage.
- Further attempts should be made to increase the transferability of programs to other post-secondary institutions.
- The quality and intensity of technological education should be maintained to preserve the differentiation between BCIT and the colleges or universities.
- More expansion of Continuing Education should be planned in Management and Engineering Technology.
- Promote the awareness that BCIT offers differentiated courses from those at colleges and universities; show specific differences between BCIT and UBC.
- Gear promotional activities to the large number of graduates who seek further education.
- Do more research into which areas of instruction need to be improved.
- Increased BCIT course information should be supplied to B.C. high schools and updated regularly.
- BCIT must follow through and position itself in the market as a unique technical education facility.

SUMMARY

BCIT is highly regarded by all five external groups surveyed. It is perceived as a high quality educational institution offering applied, intensive programs that are not available elsewhere. BCIT is seen as a unique provincial facility, although some confusion about specific programs exists among those who are more removed from the institute. In response, recommendations urge maintaining and strengthening the quality of education and increasing promotional and specific information flows to selected market segments.

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